Reviewer's report

Title: Sedative load of medications prescribed for older people with dementia in care homes

Version: 1 Date: 11 August 2011

Reviewer: Clive Bowman

Reviewer's report:

No major or essential revisions

Discretionary revisions

1) I'm not sure whether your data is capable of this bit the prevalence of sedation is fairly stable throughout study, what would be interesting is the admission status. Basically I suspect you will find this to be a patient population issue not a care home specific matter.

2) Your analysis alludes to the positive effect on prescribing of affiliation to a memory clinic - it would have been interesting to look at GP notes to determine origin of sedation, hospital/community - specialist /generalist

3) on page 13 I object to the term "frequent users" I prefer "frequently prescribed"

4) What you do show is that a significant proportion of prescriptions are lower dosage, the question is unanswered whether this is helpful or harmful and I think you could be asking for formal trials of low dose sedation in dementia to see if there could be established aconstractive usage. Whilst I do not condone unnecessary sedation at all ther is a possibility that a possible benefit of low dose treatment is being missed in the present approach.

5) It is striking that new atypicals are preferred over older agents, is this because practitioners understand them to be less problematic or just prescribing "fashion".

6) It continues to be disturbing that diagnoses are effectively presume and that severity/staging is not standardised - Mention of this in your discussion would have been interesting

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

I am the medical director of a large care home provider but do not believe I have any competing interests in regard to this review.